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Citation: Mavin SA , Elliott C, Stead V et al (2016) Women managers, leaders and the media gaze: learning from popular culture, autobiographies, broadcast and media press. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*. 31(5/6): 341–321.

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Emerald

Gender in Management:
An International Journal

**Women Managers, Leaders and the Media Gaze: Learning
from popular culture, autobiographies, broadcast and media
press**

Journal:	<i>Gender in Management: an International Journal</i>
Manuscript ID	GM-05-2016-0105
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	media representations., women managers, authentic, popular culture, women leaders, Research methods

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Women Managers, Leaders and the Media Gaze: Learning from popular culture, autobiographies broadcast and media press

Emerald Structured Abstract

Purpose To extend the ESRC funded UK Seminar Series, Challenging Gendered Media (Mis)Representations of Women Professionals and Leaders; highlight research into the gendered media constructions of women managers and leaders and outline effective methods and methodologies into diverse media.

Design/methodology/approach Gendered analysis of television, autobiographies (of Sheryl Sandberg, Karren Brady, Hillary Clinton and Julia Gillard), broadcast news media and media press through critical discourse analysis, thematic analysis, metaphor, computer-aided text analysis software following the format of the Gender Media Monitoring Project (2015) and [critical] ecological framework for advancing social change.

Findings Papers surface the gendered nature of media constructions of women managers and leaders and offer methods and methodologies for others to follow to interrogate gendered media. Further the papers discuss: how women’s leadership is glamourized, fetishized, and sexualized; the embodiment of leadership for women; how popular culture can subvert the dominant gaze; how women use agency and how powerful gendered norms shape perceptions, discourses and norms and how these are resisted, repudiated and re-presented.

Practical implications The papers focus upon how the media constructs women managers and leaders and offers implications of how media influences and is influenced by practice. There are recommendations provided as to how the media could itself be organised differently to reflect diverse audiences and what can be done to challenge gendered media.

Social implications Challenging gendered media representations of women managers and leaders is critical to social justice and equality for women in management and leadership.

Originality/value: Invited Special Issue comprising inaugural collection of research through which we get to ‘see’ women and leaders and the gendered media gaze and to learn from research into popular culture through analysis of television, autobiographies and media press.

Key Words

Woman managers, leaders, gendered media, methods, popular culture, authentic, media representations.

*Women Managers, Leaders and the Media Gaze: Learning from popular culture,
autobiographies broadcast and media press*

Emerald Structured Abstract

There is a lacuna of research in management and leadership which critiques gendered media representations and the impact on gendering processes of managers and leaders. This Special Issue of *Gender in Management: An International Journal* comprises an inaugural collection of papers through which we get to 'see' women managers through a media gaze and to learn from research into popular culture through gendered analysis of television, autobiographies and media press. We are delighted to include research papers which convey how gendered media influences, and is influenced by, women's political, public and organizational leadership and how media construct gendered (mis)representations of women leaders and managers.

The stimulus for this Special Issue emerged from a series of UK seminars, funded over three years by the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council (ESRC). The research focus of the Seminar Series is to develop methodologies and networks to challenge gendered media misrepresentations of women professionals and leaders. We have argued elsewhere (Elliott et al., forthcoming) how the media plays a critical role in society and is a recognized global power: it has the power to shape individuals' realities; provide frameworks for interpretation; reproduce and influence culture; educate; influence politics and policy and effect social change (Mazza and Alvarez, 2000). The media influence and shape the behaviour of people, not least in workplaces (Czarniawska and Rhodes, 2006) and has significant influence on how individuals, and in turn organizations, business networks and communities 'understand' managers and leaders. Thus media make sense of, and give sense to, (Hellgren et al., 2002), women as managers and as leaders. However media representations of women managers and leaders are often absent or gendered, sexualised and can communicate contradictory messages. For example, we notice in media how some women leaders are championed while simultaneously media passes judgement on how women managers and leaders 'do gender well' against their feminine sex-category (Mavin and Grandy, 2013), evidenced by an excessive focus placed on women's hair, makeup, clothes, children, and weight. This calls into question women's presence and competence to serve in senior roles.

Media representations are also consumed and influenced by future managers and leaders in a dynamic which we have critiqued in the Seminar Series and where 'you cannot be what you cannot see'. If women are invisible in the media as managers and leaders and/or gendered as managers and leaders, this impacts not only on next generations but also on normalizing women in these roles in organizations. Within this context, what is surprising is the lack of critical attention in management and leadership research to how women are represented in the media. This gap in research formed the basis for the Seminar Series and this Special Issue. We argue that the gender in management community have to take a stand and challenge the media's approach.

The lack of research interrogation of gendered media representations of women managers and leaders is a significant omission given the wealth of evidence from stakeholders outside academia which reveals that women managers and leaders continue to be underrepresented across all forms of media outlet. For example UK FEMINISTA in their report “Facts and Statistics on Gender Inequality” (accessed online April 2016), tell us that just 23% of reporters on national daily newspapers in the UK are women, with only 1 woman editor of a national daily. Only 24% of the people in the news across global news channels are women and only 6% of stories highlight issues of gender equality or inequality. Women are also under-represented in the creation of news. The report highlights how 46% of global news content reinforces gender stereotypes, almost eight times higher than stories that challenge such stereotypes (6%). While under represented, women reporters are more likely to report women as the subjects of their stories than are men and are more likely to challenge, and less likely to reinforce, stereotypes in their reports than male reporters.

In the same report, women leaders in the UK are noted as occupying on average 30.9% of ‘top jobs’ across 11 sectors and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission estimates it will take 70 years at the current rate of progress to see an equal number of female and male directors of FTSE 100 companies. In UK political realms the report identifies how only 1 in 4 MPs is a woman and women from minority ethnic groups make up only 1.2% of MPs yet comprise 4% of the UK population. Women are outnumbered 5 to 1 by men in the cabinet and only 16% of senior ministerial posts are held by women. The UK is ranked joint 58th in the world with regards to the number of women in national parliaments and just 34.7% of senior civil servants are women. At the current rate of progress UK FEMINISTA note that we would have to wait more than 150 years before seeing an equal number of women and men elected to English local councils. These statistics emphasize the importance and urgency of why we should be researching and challenging gendered media constructions of women managers and leaders as a barrier to women’s progress.

The ESRC funded Seminar Series is aimed at challenging gendered media constructions and has two key objectives: contributing to social change, equality and economic performance by raising consciousness about women’s lack of representation in the media, and to challenge gendered misrepresentations of women professionals and leaders by the media. In so doing, we are advocating for greater representation of women at work and in positions of leadership that do not fall back on lazy and gendered stereotypes such as ‘Queen Bee’ (Mavin, 2008), ‘Iron Maiden’ or ‘Selfless Heroine’ (Stead and Elliott, 2009) to describe women who hold positions of power and influence. An important means to tackle these objectives is to expand the limited literature in management that explores how women managers and leaders and issues related to women’s access to these positions are presented through the media gaze (Tienari et al., 2009; Mavin, Bryans & Cunningham, 2010). This Special Issue contributes towards fulfilling these objectives, and is a reflection of the commitment by the Gender in Management: An International Journal to call for challenge and change in the media’s gendering of women managers and leaders. We now introduce the papers in this Special Issue and would like to thank all authors for engaging in the process of change and challenge.

The first paper addresses an important aspect of challenging gendered misrepresentations of women professionals and leaders by the media identified by the ESRC Seminar Series - to provide explanatory frameworks that enable more in-depth, critical and nuanced understandings of the ways in which women's leadership is both represented and challenged. In their article '*Bodies, Sexualities and Women Leaders in Popular Culture: From Spectacle to Metapicture*' Emma Bell and Amanda Sinclair respond to this need by adopting the metaphor of spectacle and the notion of metapicture to explore the little researched area of the visibility and gendered scrutiny of senior women, which they observe as evident through cultural commentaries on women's bodies, clothes, sexuality and demeanour. Recognizing how the media reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes that perpetuate gendered ways of seeing leadership, Emma and Amanda focus on popular culture to explore the visual representation of women leaders and how women leaders' bodies and sexualities are rendered visible in particular ways.

The paper provides a comprehensive overview of the representation of women's leadership in popular culture; women are historically and contemporaneously viewed, in contrast to men, as bodies rather than leaders, resulting in women performing complex self-surveillance and identity work to regulate their ambition as leaders. They illustrate how the metaphor of the woman as spectacle, described as a visually striking picture or display, draws attention to how women are both 'the surveyor and the surveyed'; illuminating in film and television how women's leadership is glamourized, fetishized, and sexualized. Acknowledging the importance of revealing the representation of women as passive objects of the male gaze, Emma and Amanda point to how popular culture can nonetheless also subvert the dominant metaphor of spectacle, illuminating women's agency and how norms are resisted, repudiated and re-presented. Through an analysis of the Danish television series *Borgen*, they show how the notion of metapicture, a self-referential picture that exposes the multiple gazes of subjects, spectator and painter, provides deeper and more nuanced appreciation of the representation of women as leaders. Their powerful and detailed analysis therefore offers an important contribution to an emerging critical literature on the representation of women leaders in the media by offering an explanatory framework that reveals representations of women's leadership as complex and multifaceted. A framework that illuminates how dominant rules regarding gender and leadership are made visible, and also invites consideration of how women leaders' experiences are self-reflexively agentic, actively disruptive and offering the potential for a female imaginary that eschews conventional binaries.

The second paper by Isla Kapasi, Kate Sang, Kate and Rafat Sitko '*Gender, authentic leadership and identity: analysis of women leaders' autobiographies*' begins with leadership theories and the under representation of women and focuses upon understanding how high profile women leaders construct a gendered leadership identity against a back drop of authentic leadership. The authors introduce us to thematic analyses of autobiographies as a source of knowledge in understanding women leaders' identity work. Autobiographies, we are told, allow for an analysis of the subjective, culturally bound presentation of women

leader's lives, rather than biographies which tend to be written from an outsider, objective perspective (Anderson and Chawla, 2004). Four women leaders from business and politics are considered through interpretations of their stories - Sheryl Sandberg, Karren Brady, Hillary Clinton and Julia Gillard. The authors argue that the autobiographies construct gender and leadership against normative expectations and raise issues of scrutiny of the body and a sense of responsibility to other women. The authors illuminate through their analysis how, in the case of authentic leadership - a theory presented as gender neutral, the authenticity of leadership has, to some extent, been crafted by the media rather than the leader. We are introduced to how the women in this study use their autobiographies as a means to grow their follower base and connect with new followers or readers. However the argument here is that regardless of the women leaders' attempts to 'craft' and control the image of an 'authentic self' for consumption in popular culture, gendered media representations of individuals and leadership remain. We are offered an empirical and a methodological contribution through the research, not least raising the issues of privilege and the embodiment of leadership for women as constructed within a popular culture media. We also get a sense of how the women leaders have carefully crafted a 'true self' to 'fit' with reader and follower expectations which demonstrates the power of media to shape the perceptions, discourse and norms of leaders, gender and more.

The third paper by Rainhart Lang and Irma Rybnikova entitled *'Discursive constructions of women managers in German mass media in the gender quota debate 2011-2013* explores media representations of the political debate around women quotas in two German newspapers: Welt and Bild. The paper suggests that whilst the media used a diversity of images as part of the reporting on quotas, a range of limiting dualities constructed on the gender binary and reductionist identity prescriptions dominated. The paper sets out to explore whether the dominant economic rationale for addressing women's inclusion in senior positions via the development of quotas remains a dominant discourse through the analysis of discursive images of women as managers. Whilst there had been a debate over committing Germany to a legislative approach to gender equity through the 1990s, a voluntarist approach was adopted which failed to increase the number of women in senior positions, particularly in private German businesses. The notion of a quota returned in 2011 and a debate took place between the main political parties as to what such a quota might be, and the range of contexts in which it might be applied resulting in a 30% quota for supervisory boards of large German companies. Outlining the limited literature on media and women managers Rainhart and Irma go on to outline a discourse-historical analysis informed by a critical discourse analysis methodology which draws attention to language as a social practice structured through power, control, discrimination and marginalization. This framework highlights how media outlets such as these newspapers offer space as discourse arenas for federal politicians, which frames the debate on women's participation in senior positions as a political rather than societal issue. Dualities around equal rights v freedom, women v men, and emphasized femininity v emphasized masculinity are presented. Whilst there is evidence of heterogeneity in the images and argumentations used, there remains a constant: a concern for an imagined economic impact and restriction of freedom for businesses, which is connected to

stereotypical gendered representations of women and an individualized discourse which negates the impact of structural effects upon opportunities for women.

The research outlined in the fourth paper *'Representing Women? Leadership Roles and Women in Canadian Broadcast News'* by Wendy Cukier, Samantha Jackson Mohamed Elmi, Erin Roach, Darren Cyr, supports previous research which shows that media portrayals often serve to discourage the notion of women as legitimate leaders compared to men by relying on tropes and reproducing gender stereotypes about what a 'leader' looks like. The paper gives context to broadcast news media in Canada and the Global Media Monitoring project research methodology. Readers are introduced to a framework for studying gendered broadcasting which is useful as a way to gain empirics to challenge gendered media representations. The study focuses on analysing supertime broadcast news on four television stations during seven randomly selected days over a period of a month to understand patterns of representation of women in Canadian media. This includes four supertime (6-7 pm) local news broadcasts: the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC), Canadian Television (CTV), CityTV, and Global TV which featured 2,031 individuals over the constructed week (in 2012). In doing so the paper follows the format of the Gender Media Monitoring Project (2015) with trained research assistants applying computer-aided text analysis (CATA) software to systematically code each individual through four coding stages: all on-screen anchors and guests are coded for gender, age range, and ethnicity; individuals are coded according to their on-screen 'role' and then further categorized into a type of leader; each person's speaking method is analysed and whether they were on or off-screen and individuals are coded as being presented in a generally negative, generally positive, or neutral/mixed manner.

The study's findings are stark and across all major news broadcasters women are less likely to be positively portrayed in leadership positions, or to be quoted directly and on screen, and are more likely to be shown as victims, in a negative light, and to be paraphrased and quoted off-screen. The authors advocate a [critical] ecological model as a framework for advancing social change which brings together different disciplines and perspectives to consider barriers and drivers and advance equality. The findings from the research are presented in this ecological model with the authors identifying actions to progress greater equality. Significantly the authors call for an integrated change strategy that crosses levels: strong regulation, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms; rigorous review of the performance of broadcasting organizations and processes for framing news and recruiting guests as well as more persuasive interventions to encourage women to promote themselves on media outlets. The reticence of women to appear on the news as experts in Canada and elsewhere in Western cultures is complex and future research in this area would be valuable.

Ganiyat Tijani-Adenle's paper *'She's Homely, Beautiful and then, Hardworking! Critiquing the Representation of Women Leaders and Managers in the Nigerian Press'* is a rare examination of how women leaders and managers are represented in the press outside the global north. The paper seeks to begin to redress this balance through a critical discourse analysis of the Nigerian print media's representation of women who occupy management or

leadership positions. Nigeria has seen an increase in the number of women in senior roles in recent years so the author is also curious to discover if this has influenced how women leaders are represented. Unusually, but a reflection of Nigerian editors' choice regarding who makes the cover of their newspaper's magazine supplement, the analysis includes the wives of prominent men in Nigerian society. The two newspapers studied are considered mainstream media outlets, with one regarded as appealing to the Nigerian social elite (*Guardian Life*) and the other to a more general population (*Vanguard Life*). It also provides the opportunity to compare the views of a man editor (*Guardian Life*) with a woman editor (*Vanguard Life*). Ganiyat Tijani-Adenle's analysis draws attention to the specific socio-cultural environment which women managers and leaders in Nigeria navigate.

Noting the expectation for 'responsible' women to be married, raise children and maintain a home, the paper provides examples of how this is reflected in the questions posed by newspaper reporters to the featured women. Men too, are asked about marriage in media profiles, but there is a qualitative difference in the tenor of these questions. Where women are asked about how they are coping in combining their wife/mother responsibilities with their leadership roles, men were asked how marriage was treating them. The author expresses disappointment that none of the women interviewed challenged the imposition of this role upon them. Rather, they seemed content to convince society that they were still 'women'. Ganiyat Tijani-Adenle, concludes by warning of the broader consequences for Nigeria if the masculine hegemony, reflected in representations of Nigerian women managers and leaders, continues. The recommendation is to challenge gendered representations through greater media literacy amongst women, and training for journalists and editors to increase awareness of the consequences of gendered representations.

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